WHERE THERE'S A WILL

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SYNOPSIS.

Minnie, spring-house girl at Hope sanatorium, tells the story. It opens with the arrival of Miss Patty Jennings, who is reported to be engaged to marry a prince, and the death of the old doctor who owns the sanatorium. The estate is left to a scapegrace grandson, Dicky Carter, who must appear on a certain date and run the sanatorium successfully for two months or forfeit the inheritance. A case of mumps delays Dick's arrival. Mr. Thoburn is hovering about in hopes of securing the place for a summer hotel. Pierce, a college man in hard luck, is prevailed upon by Van Alstyne, Dick's brother-in-law, to impersonate the missing heir and take charge of the sanatorium until Carter arrives. Dick, who has eloped with Patty's younger sister, Dorothy, arrives, and the couple go into hiding in the old shelter house. Fearing to face Dorothy's father, who is at the sanatorium, Dick arranges with Pierce to continue in the management of the property. Julia Summers, leading lady of Pierce's stranded theatrical company, arrives. She is suing Dicky for breach of promise. The prince, under the incognito of Oskar von Inwald, arrives at the sanatorium. Barnes, character man with Pierce's show and a graduate M. D., takes the place of sanatorium physician. Pierce, who is very much interested in Patty, shows a strong dislike for Inwald. Dick becomes peevish over the independent manner in which Pierce is running the sanatorium. Miss Summers discovers that the Dick Carter she is seeking is the owner of the sanatorium. Dick, in attempting to steal his love letters from Miss Summers, breaks into the wrong room and gets the wrong letters. Miss Summers' dog has convulsions from overeating. The patients believe it has been poisoned by the doped spring water. In a panic they go to Pierce and start a row. He tells them the truth about themselves and they make preparations to leave. A snow blockade compels the patients to return. Pierce lays out a course of rational and simple living and all agree to give it a trial. They take to the new order of things enthusiastically and the effects are quickly seen. Dick and his relatives however are not pleased. They hold a protest meeting in the shelter house and Miss Summers walks in on them. Miss Summers' vindictiveness toward Dick dwindles away at sight of his wife, Dorothy.

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

I did my best to leave them alone on the way back, but Miss Patty stuck close to my heels. It was snowing, and the going was slow. For the first five minutes she only spoke once.

"And so Miss Summers and Dicky Carter are old friends!"

"It appears so," Mr. Pierce said.

"She's rather magnanimous, under the circumstances," Miss Patty remarked demurely.

"Under what circumstances?"

I heard her laugh a little, behind me.

"Never mind," she said. "You needn't tell me anything you don't care to. But what a stew you must all have been in!"

There was a minute's silence behind me, and then Mr. Pierce laughed too.

"Stew!" he said. "For the last few days I've been either paralyzed with fright or electrified into wild bursts of mendacity. And I'm not naturally a liar."

"Really!" she retorted. "What an actor you are!"

They laughed together at that, and I gained a little on them. At the corner where the path skirted the deer park and turned toward the house I lost them altogether and I floundered on alone. But I had not gone twenty feet when I stopped suddenly. About fifty yards ahead a lantern was coming toward me through the snow, nad I could hear a man's voice, breathless and gasping.

"Set it down," it said. "The damned thing must be filled with lead." It sounded like Thoburn.

"It's the snow," another voice replied, Mr. von Inwald's. "I told you it would take two trips."

"Yes," Thoburn retorted, breathing in groans. "Stay up all night to get

They Had Stopped in the Shelter of the Fence Corner.

the blamed stuff here, and then get up at dawn for a cold bath and a twenty-mile walk and an apple for breakfast. Ugh, my shoulder is dislocated."

I turned and flew back to Miss Patty and Pierce. They had stopped in the shelter of the fence corner and Mr. Pierce was on his knees in front of her! I was so astounded that I forgot for the moment what had brought me.

"Just a second," he was saying. "It's ice on the heel."

"Please get up off your knees, you'll take cold."

"Never had a cold. I'll scrape it off with my knife. Why don't you wear overshoes?"

"I never have a cold!" she retorted. "Why, Minnie, is that you?"

"Quick," I panted. "Thoburn and Mr. von Inwald coming—basket—lantern—warn the shelter-house!"

"Great Scott!" Mr. Pierce said. "Here, you girls crawl over the fence; you'll be hidden there. I'll run back and warn them."

The lantern was swinging again. Mr. Thoburn's grumbling came to us through the snow.

"I can't climb the fence!" Miss Patty said pitifully. But Mr. Pierce had gone.

I reached my basket through the bars and climbed the fence in a hurry. Miss Patty had got almost to the top and was standing there on one snow-covered rail, staring across at me through the darkness.

"I can't, Minnie," she whispered hopelessly. "I never could climb a fence, and in this skirt—"

"Quick!" I said in a low tone. The lantern was very close. "Put your leg over."

She did, and sat there looking down at me like a scared baby.

"Now the other."

"I—I can't!" she whispered. "If I put them both over I'll fall."

"Hurry!!"

With a little grunt she put the other foot over, sat a minute with agony in her face and her arms out, then she slid off with a squeal and brought up in a sitting position inside the fence corner. I dropped beside her.

"What was that noise?" said Thoburn, almost upon us. "Something's moving inside that fence corner."

"It's them deers," Mike's voice this time. We could make out the three figures. "Darned nuisance, them deers is. They'd have been shot long ago if the springhouse girl hadn't objected. She thinks she's the whole cheese around here."

"Set it down again," Mr. von Inwald panted. We heard the rattle of bottles as they put down the basket, and the next instant Thoburn's fat hand was resting on the rail of the fence over our heads. I could feel Miss Patty trembling beside me.

But he didn't look over. He stood there resting, breathing hard, and swearing at the weather, while Mike waited, in surly silence, and the von Inwald cursed in German.

After my heart had been beating in my ears for about three years the fat hand moved, and I heard the rattle of glass again and Thoburn's groans as he bent over his half of the load.

"Come on," he said, and the others grunted and started on.

When they had disappeared in the snow we got out of our cramped position and prepared to scurry home. I climbed the fence and looked after them. "Humph!" I said, "I guess that basket isn't for the hungry poor. I'd give a good bit to know—" Then I turned and looked for Miss Patty. She was flat on the snow, crawling between the two lower rails of the fence.

"Have you no shame?" I demanded.

She looked up at me with her head and half her long sealskin coat through the fence.

"None," she said pitifully. "Minnie, I'm stuck perfectly tight!"

"You ought to be left as you are," I said, jerking at her, "for people to come"—jerk—"tomorrow to look at"—jerk. She came through at that, and we lay together in the snow and like to burst a rib laughing.

"You'll never be a princess, Miss Patty," I declared. "You're too lowly minded."

She sat up suddenly and straightened her sealskin cap on her head.

"I wish," she said unpleasantly, "I wish you wouldn't always drag in disagreeable things, Minnie!"

And she was sulky all the way to the house.

Miss Summers came to my room that night as I was putting my hot-water bottle to bed, in a baby-blue silk wrapper with a band of fur around the low neck—Miss Summers, of course, not the hot-water bottle.

"Well!" she said, sitting down on the foot of the bed and staring at me. "Well, young woman, for a person who has never been farther away than Finleyville you do pretty well!"

"Do what?" I asked, with the covers up to my chin.

"Do what, Miss Innocence!" she said mockingly. "You're the only red-haired woman I ever saw who didn't look as sophisticated as the devil. I'll tell you one thing, though." She reached down into the pocket of her dressing-gown and brought up a cigarette and a match. "You never had me fooled for a minute!" She looked at me over the match.

I lay and stared back.

"And another thing," she said. "I never had any real intention of marrying Dicky Carter and raising a baby sanatorium. I wouldn't have the face to ask Arabella to live here."

"I'm glad you feel that way, Miss Summers," I said. "I've gone through a lot; I'm an old woman in the last two weeks. My hair's falling from its having to stand up on end half the time."

She leaned over and put her cigarette on the back of my celluloid mirror, and then suddenly she threw back her head and laughed.

"Minnie!" she said, between fits, "Minnie! As long as I live I'll never forget that wretched boy's face! And the sand boxes! And the blankets over the windows! And the tarpaulin over the rafters! And Mr. Van Alstyne sitting on the lawnmower! I'd rather have had my minute in that doorway than fifty thousand dollars!"

"If you had had to carry out all those things—" I began, but she checked me.

"Listen!" she said. "Somebody with brains has got to take you young people in hand. You're not able to look after yourselves. I'm fond of Alan Pierce, for one thing, and I don't care to see a sanatorium that might have been the child of my solicitude kidnaped and reared as a summer hotel by Papa Thoburn. A good fat man is very, very good, Minnie, but when he is bad he is horrid."

"It's too late," I objected feebly. "He can't get it now."

"Can't he!" She got up and yawned, stretching. "Well, I'll lay you ten to one that if we don't get busy he'll have the house empty in thirty-six hours, and a bill of sale on it in as many days." Then she told me what she knew of Thoburn's scheme, and it turned me cold.

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Doctor Barnes came to me at the news stand the next morning before gymnasium.

"Well," he said, "you look as busy as a dog with fleas. Have you heard the glad tidings?"

"What?" I asked without much spirit. "I've heard considerable tidings lately, and not much of it has cheered me up any."

He leaned over and ran his fingers up through his hair.

"You know, Miss Minnie," he said, "somebody ought kindly to kill our friend Thoburn, or he'll come to a bad end."

"Shall I do it, or will you?" I said, filling up the chewing gum jar. (Mr. Pierce had taken away the candy case.)

Doctor Barnes glanced around to see if there was anyone near, and leaned farther over.

"The cupboard isn't empty now!" he said. "Not for nothing did I spend part of the night in the Dicky-bird's nest! What do you think is in the cupboard?"

"I know about it," I said shortly. "Liquor—in a case labeled 'Books—breakable.'"

"Almost a goal. But not only liquors, my little friend. Champagne—cases of it—caviar, canned grouse with truffles, lobster, cheese, fine cigars, everything you could think of, erotic, exotic and narcotic. An orgy in cans and bottles, a bacchanalian revel; a cupboard full of indigestion, joy, forgetfulness and katzenjammer. Oh, my suffering palate, to have to leave it all without one sniff, one sip, one nibble!"

He's wasting his money," I said. "They're all crazy about the simple life."

He looked around and, seeing no one in the lobby, reached over and took one of my hands.

"Strange," he said, looking at it. "No webs, and yet it's been an amphibious little creature most of its life. My dear girl, our friend Thoburn is a rascal, but he is also a student of mankind and a philosopher. Gee," he said, "think of a woman fighting her way alone through the world with a bit of a fist like that!"

I jerked my hand away.

"It's like this, my dear," he said. "Human nature's a curious thing. It's human nature, for instance, for me to be crazy about you, when you're as hands-offish as a curly porcupine. And it is human nature, by the same token, to like to be bullied, especially about health, and to respect and admire the fellow who does the bullying. That's why we were crazy about Roosevelt, and that's why Pierce is trailing his kingly robes over them while they lie on their faces and eat dirt—and stewed fruit."

He reached for my hand again, but I put it behind me.

"But alas," he said, "there is another side to the human nature, and our friend Thoburn has not kept a summer hotel for nothing. It is notoriously weak, especially as to stomach. You may feed 'em prunes and whole-wheat bread and apple sauce, and after a while they'll forget the fat days, and remember only the lean and hungry ones. But let some student of human nature at the proper moment introduce just one fat day, one feast, one revel—"

"Talk English," I said sharply.

"Don't break in on my flights of fancy," he objected. "If you want the truth, Thoburn is going to have a party—a forbidden feast. He's going to rouse again the sleeping dogs of appetite, and send them ravening back to the Plaza, to Sherry's and Del's and the little Italian restaurants on Sixth avenue. He's going to take them upon a high mountain and show them the wines and delicatessen of the earth, and then ask them if they're going to be bullied into eating boiled beef and cabbage."

"Then I don't care how soon he does it," I said dispondently. "I'd rather die quickly than by inches."

"Die!" he said. "Not a bit of it. Remember, our friend Pierce is also a student of human nature. He's thinking it out now in the cold plunge, and I miss my guess if Thoburn's skyrocket hasn't got a stick that'll come back and hit him on the head."

He had been playing with one of the chewing gum jars, and when he had gone I shoved it back into its place. It was by the merest chance that I glanced at it, and I saw that he had slipped a small white box inside. On the lid was written "For a good girl," and inside lay the red puffs from Mrs. Yost's window down in Finleyville. Just under them was an envelope. I could scarcely see to open it.

"Dearest Minnie," the note inside said, "I had them matched to my thatch, and I think they'll match yours. And since, in the words of the great Herbert Spencer, things that

"Last Call to the Dining Car, Minnie."

match the same thing match each other—! What do you say?—Barnes."

"P. S.—I love you. I feel like a damn fool saying it, but heaven knows it's true."

P. P. S.—Still love you. It's easier the second time."

"N. B.—I love you—got the habit now and can't stop writing it.—B."

Well, I had to keep calm and attend to business, but I was seething inside like a Seidlitz powder. Every few minutes I'd reread the letter under the edge of the stand, and the more I read it the more excited I got. When a woman's gone past thirty before she gets her first love letter, she isn't sure whether to thank providence or the man, but she's pretty sure to make a fool of herself.

Thoburn came to the news stand on his way out with the ice-cutting gang to the pond.

"Last call to the dining car, Minnie," he said. "Will you—won't you—will you—won't you—will you join the dance?"

"I haven't any reason for changing my plans," I retorted. "I promised the old doctor to stick by the place, and I'm sticking."

"As the man said when he sat down on the fly paper. You're going by your heart, Minnie, and not by your head, and in this toss, heads win."

But with my new puffs on the back of my head, and my letter in my pocket, I wasn't easy to discourage. Thoburn shouldered his pick and, headed by Doctor Barnes, the ice-cutters started out in single file. As they passed Doctor Barnes glanced at me, and my heart almost stopped.

"Do they—is it a match?" he asked, with his eyes on mine.

I couldn't speak, but I nodded "yes," and all that afternoon I could see the wonderful smile that lit up his face as he went out.

Miss Cobb stopped at the news stand on her way to the gymnasium. She was a homely woman at any time, and in her bloomers she looked like a soup-bone. She padded over to the counter in her gym shoes, and for once she'd forgotten her legs.

"May I speak to you, Minnie?" she asked.

"You mostly do," I said. "There isn't a new rule about speaking, is there?"

"This is important, Minnie," she said, rolling her eyes around as she always did when she was excited. "I'm in such a state of ex—I see you bought the puffs! Perhaps you will lend them to me if we arrange for a country dance."

"I'm not lending them," I said firmly. It would have been like lending an engagement ring, to my mind. Miss Cobb was not offended. She went at once to what had brought her, and bent over the counter.

"Minnie, you love Miss Jennings almost like a daughter, don't you?"

"Like a sister, Miss Cobb," I said. "I'm not feeble yet."

"Well, you wouldn't want to see her deceived."

"I wouldn't have it," I answered.

"Then what do you call this?" She put a small package on the counter, and stared at me over it. "There's treachery here, black treachery." She pointed one long thin forefinger at the bundle.

"What is it? A bomb?" I asked, stepping back. More than once it had occurred to me that having royalty around sometimes meant dynamite. Miss Cobb showed her teeth.

"Yes, a bomb," she said. "Minnie, last night, when the Summers woman was out, goodness knows where, Blanche Moody and I went through her room. We did not find my precious missives from Mr. Jones, but we did find these, Minnie, tied around with a pink stocking. Minnie, I have felt it all along. Mr. Oskar von Inwald is the prince himself."

"No!"

"Yes. And more than that, he is making desperate love to Miss Summers. Three of those letters were written in one day! Why, even Mr. Jones—"

"The wretch!" I cried. I was suddenly savage. Miss Cobb was reaching out for the bundle. I snatched it from her.

"Give me those letters instantly," she cried shrilly. But I marched from behind the counter and over to the fireplace.

"Never," I said, and put the package on the log. When they were safely blazing, I turned and looked at Miss Cobb.

"I'd put my hand right beside those letters to save Miss Patty a heartache," I said, "and you know it."

"You're a fool." She was raging. "You'll let her marry him and have the heartaches afterward."

"She won't marry him," I snapped, and walked away with my chin up, leaving her staring.

But I wasn't so sure as I pretended to be. Mr. von Inwald and Mr. Jennings had been closeted together most of the morning, and Mr. von Inwald was whistling as he started out for the military walk. It seemed as if the very thing that had given Mr. Pierce his chance to make good had improved Mr. Jennings' disposition enough to remove the last barrier to Miss Jennings' wedding with somebody else.

CHAPTER XIV.

Even if we hadn't known, we'd have guessed there was something in the air. There was an air of subdued excitement during the rest hour in the springhouse, and a good bit of whispering and laughing, in groups which would break up with faces as long as the moral law the moment they saw my eye on them.

They were planning a mutiny, as you may say, and I guess no sailors on a pirate ship were more afraid of the captain's fist than they were of Mr. Pierce's disapproval. He'd been smart enough to see that most of them, having bullied other people all their lives, liked the novelty of being bullied themselves. And now they were getting a new thrill by having a revolt. They were terribly worked up.

Miss Patty stayed after the others had gone, sitting in front of the empty fireplace in the same chair Mr. Pierce ueually took, and keeping her back to me. When I'd finished folding the steamer rugs and putting them away, I went around and stood in front of her.

"Your eyes are red," I remarked.

"I've got a cold." She was very haughty.

"Your nose isn't red," I insisted. "And, anyhow, you say you never have a cold."

"I wish you would let me alone, Minnie." She turned her back to me. "I dare say I may have a cold if I wish."

"Do you know what they are saying here?" I demanded. "Do you know that Miss Cobb has found out in some way or other who Mr. von Inwald is? And that the four o'clock gossip edition says your father has given his consent and that you can go and buy a diadem or whatever you are going to wear, right off?"

"Well," she said, in a choked voice, with her back to me, "what of it? Didn't you and Mr. Pierce both do your best to bring it about?"

"Our what?" I couldn't believe my ears.

"You made father well. He's so p-pleasant he'll do anything—except leave this awful place!"

"Well, of all the ungrateful people—" I began, and then Mr. Pierce came in. He had a curious way of stopping when he saw her, as if she just took the wind out of his sails, so to speak, and then of whipping off his hat, if anything with sails can wear a hat, and going up to her with his heart in his eyes. He always went straight to her and stopped suddenly about two feet away, trying to think of something ordinary to say. Because the extraordinary thing he wanted to say was always on the end of his tongue.

But this day he didn't light up when he saw her. He went through all the other motions, but his mouth was set in a straight line, and when he came close to her and looked down his eyes were hard. It's been my experience of men that the younger they are the harder they take things and the more uncompromising they are.

"I was looking for you," he said to her. "The bishop has just told me. There are no obstacles now."

"None," she said, looking up at him with wretchedness in her eyes, if he had only seen. "I am very happy."

"She was just saying," I said bitterly, "how grateful she was to both of us."

"I don't understand."

"It is not hard to understand," she said, smiling. I wanted to stay for. "Father was unreasonable because he was ill. You have made him well. I can never thank you enough."

But she rather overdid the joy part of it, and he leaned over and looked in her face.

"I think I'm stupid," he said. "I know I'm unhappy. But isn't that what I was to do—to make them well if I could?"

"How could anybody know—" she began angrily, and then stopped. "You have done even more," she said sweetly. "You've turned them into cherubims and seraphims. Butter would't melt in their mouths."

He smiled..

"My amiability must be the reason you dislike me!" he suggested. They had both forgotten me.

"Do I dislike you?" she asked, raising her eyebrows. "I never really thought about it, but I'm sure I don't." She didn't look at him, she looked at me. She knew I knew she lied.

His smile faded.

"Well," he said, "speaking of disliking amiability, you don't hate yourself, I'm sure."

"You are wrong," she retorted. "I loathe myself." And she walked to the window. He took a step or two after her.

"Why do it at all?" he asked in a low tone. "You don't love him—and can't. And if it isn't love—" He remembered me suddenly and stopped.

"Please go on," she said sweetly from the window. "Do not mind Minnie. She is my conscience anyhow. She is always scolding me; you might both scold in chorus."

"I wouldn't presume to scold."

"Then give me a little advice and look superior and righteous. I'm accustomed to that also."

"As long as you are in this mood, I can't give you anything but a very good day," he said angrily, and went toward the door. But when he had almost reached it he turned.

"I will say this," he said, "you have known for three days that Mr. Thoburn was going to have a supper tonight, and you didn't let us know. You must have known his purpose."

I guess I was as surprised as she was. I'd never suspected she knew.

She looked at him over her shoulder.

"Why shouldn't he have a supper?" she demanded angrily. "I'm starving—we're all starving for decent food. I'm kept here against my will. Why shouldn't I have one respectable meal? You with your wretched stewed fruits and whole-wheat breads! Ugh!"

"I'm sorry. Thoburn's idea, of course, is to make the guests discontented, so they will leave."

"Oh!" she said. She hadn't thought of that, and she flushed. "At least," she said, "you must give me credit for

"I Stood in Front of Her."

not trying to spoil Dick and Dolly's chance here."

"We are going to allow the party to go on," he said, stiff and uncompromising. It would have been better if he'd accepted her bit of apology.

"How kind of you! I dare say we would have it, anyhow." She was sarcastic again.

"Probably. And you—will go?"

"Certainly."

"Even when the result—"

"Oh, don't preach!" she said, putting her hands to her ears. "If you and Minnie want to preach, why don't you preach at each other? Minnie talks 'love, love, love.' And you preach health and morality. You drive me crazy between you."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A child receives kisses free, but a young man has to steal them and an old man has to buy them.